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Opening Talk

by WOLFGANG PAULI
President of the Conference

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I first wish to give a hearty welcome to all of you, who came here from so many countries to contribute to the discussions about EINSTEIN'S ideas on relativity. The original reason for this meeting was the fact, that just 50 years ago EINSTEIN wrote his first paper here in this town of Bern. From my personal knowledge of EINSTEIN I can assure you, that he always had a particular sentimental attitude towards Berne. For instance in his working room at his home in Princeton the visitor could see only a single diploma: it was an honorary membership of the 'Naturforschende Gesellschaft in Bern' signed by ADRIAN and BALTZER.

In a letter to Prof. MERCIER from February 10th he expressed his joy and gratitude about our report on the Jubilee conference, which appeared to him to be promising. He added „Es wird sich dabei zeigen, daß die Erwartungen, die an das allgemeine Relativitätsprinzip geknüpft werden, außerordentlich verschieden sind. Dies ist gut so; denn unter uns Wissenschaftlern hat das Philosophenwort ‚der Krieg ist der Vater aller Dinge‘ nicht den fatalen Beigeschmack, der ihm sonst anhaftet.“

It was in the middle of the final preparations for this conference when the sad alarming news reached us, that EINSTEIN is no longer among us. It means, that some of us, who through so many a year enjoyed his warm friendship, will have to get slowly accustomed to it, that from now on they are left without it. It also means that this congress, while objectively occupied with EINSTEIN'S work, should at the same time be a farewell to the man.

By this unforeseen event this important moment is a turning point in the history of the theory of relativity and therefore of physics.

Let us hope that EINSTEIN'S wisdom, which is for me always clearly visible even in what I believe to be his errors, will be a good guide to the reports and discussions of this conference and will show us the right way towards the future.

